

Message Text

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ACTION CU-03

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USIAC

FOR IEA AND ICS/D, CINCPAC FOR USIA ADVISOR, STATE FOR CU/BA

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS:

SUBJECT: WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS --- MAY 27 - JUNE 2, 1977

1. MEDIA CONCERNS: RTG ANNOUNCED MAY 26 IT WILL USE SATELLITES TO RELAY RADIO AND TV PROGRAMS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY, CLAIMING SATELLITES WILL GIVE BETTER RESULTS THAN EXISTING MICROWAVE EQUIPMENT. THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE HAS ALSO ORDERED A NEW "TELECOMMUNICATIONS CHANNEL" OPENED TO RELAY BANGKOK TV PROGRAMS LIVE THROUGHOUT NORTHERN AND NORTHEAST THAILAND. THE RTG, MOREOVER, WILL PUBLIC A DAILY NEWSPAPER, UNDER CONTROL OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE, RATHER THAN THE NEW NATIONAL MASS MEDIA ORGANIZATION AS PREVIOUSLY ANNOUNCED. A JUNE 2 NEWSPAPER ACCOUNT ALSO DESCRIBED PLANS FOR A NATIONAL NEWS AGENCY UNDER THE MEDIA ORGANIZATION "TO VOICE THE REAL OPINIONS AND POLICIES OF THE GOVERNMENT." COMMENT: ALL THESE MEASURES PROVIDE THE GOVERNMENT WITH GREATER CONTROL OVER THAI MEDIA CONTENT.

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2. PRESS BILL DEFEATED: A BILL WHICH WOULD HAVE REQUIRED NEWSPAPER EDITORS TO PRINT CORRECTIONS WITH PROMINENT EQUAL TO THE ORIGINAL STORY OR FACE UP TO SIX MONTHS IN PRISON AND A \$100 FINE AND WHICH REQUIRED REGISTRATION OF REPORTERS AND EDITORS WAS OVERWHELMINGLY DEFEATED IN PARLIAMENT MAY 27. THE MEASURE, SPONSORED BY AN MP FROM SOUTHEAST THAILAND WHO HAD FREQUENT CLASHES WITH PRIVINCIAL NEWSPAPERS BEFORE THE COUP, WAS STRONGLY

OPPOSED BY ALL JOURNALISTS AND NEWSPAPER ASSOCIATIONS IN THAILAND IN AN UNUSUAL DISPLAY OF UNITY. LAWYERS HAD ALSO SAID IT WAS TOO SEVERE. COMMENT: WHILE THE BILL'S SPONSOR WAS UNDOUBTEDLY MOTIVATED BY HIS DISLIKE FOR THE PRESS, MANY NEWSMEN FEEL THAT THE MEASURE WAS BEING USED BY THE GOVERNMENT AS TRIAL BALLON TO INSTITUTIONALIZE IN LAW STRONG REGULATIONS TO KEEP IN THE PRESS IN LINE.

3. CARRIER VISIT ATTRACTS NATIONWIDE ATTENTION: THE MAY 26-31 VISIT OF THE USS CONSTELLATION TO THAI WATERS STIMULATED EXTENSIVE ACTIVITY, GOOD WILL AND REAFFIRMATION OF THAI-US FRIENDSHIP. THE PRIME MINISTER, US AMBASSADOR AND SENIOR THAI OFFICIALS VISITED THE CARRIER ON MAY 25 FOR A SPECTACULAR UNDERWAY DEMONSTRATION OF THE SHIP'S MASSIVE AIR AND FIRE POWER. SUBSEQUENTLY, THE AMBASSADOR, THE PRIME MINISTER AND US NAVY OFFICIALS HOSTED SOCIAL EVENTS INVOLVING IMPORTANT THAI PERSONALITIES. USIS ARRANGED A FULL SCHEDULE OF COMMUNITY RELATIONS ACTIVITIES INCLUDING TWO BASKETBALL GAMES WITH THAI TEAMS (ATTENDANCE 3,000), A SOCCER MATCH WITH A THAI NAVY TEAM IN THE NATIONAL STADIUM ACCOMPANIED BY BAND AND DRILL DISPLAYS (ATTENDANCE 4,000), SEVENTH FLEET BAND CONCERT AT THE BINATIONAL CENTER (OVERFLOW ATTENDANCE 890, TENNIS MATCHES, BLOOD DONATIONS, SPECIAL PRESS AND STUDENT TOURS OF SHIP AND DAILY CIVIC ACTION PROJECTS. DAILY MEDIA AND EDITORIAL COVERAGE OF THESE EVENTS WAS HEAVY AND STRONGLY POSITIVE. SHIP'S PERSONNEL MADE EXCELLENT IMPRESSION WITH GOOD HUMOR AND BEHAVIOR. UNUSUAL IMPACT RESULTED PARTIALLY FROM TIMING, AS SHIP WAS SEEN AS MANIFESTATION OF US FRIENDSHIP AND POWER AT A TIME INTENSE THAI INSECURITY. SIMULTANEOUS VISIT OF DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OAKLEY WAS ALSO REGARDED AS POSITIVE INDICATION US HAS NOT ABANDONED INTEREST IN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THAILAND.

4. ARMACOST DISCUSSES THAI-US RELATIONS: FIVE UPPER-LEVEL OFFICIALS IN THE THAI MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS MET FOR OVER TWO HOURS MAY 26 WITH NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL STAFFER MICHAEL ARMACOST IN WHAT WAS, REFRESHINGLY, A TWO-WAY DISCUSSION. THAI CONCERNS RANGED FROM THE AMERICAN PULLBACK IN KOREA TO HOW DEVELOPING NATIONS FIT INTO THE TRI-LATERAL RELATIONSHIP EMPHASIZED BY THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION. ARMACOST ASSURED THE THAI THAT AMERICA NEITHER EXPECTS NOR DESIRES JAPAN TO TAKE OVER SECURITY RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE AREA. HE STRESSED THAT THE TRI-LATERAL RELATIONSHIP IS BASICALLY ECONOMIC AND POINTED OUT THAT EFFORTS TO BUILD STABLE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN ALL THE COUNTRIES IN ASIA DEPEND UPON WORLD ECONOMIC STABILITY. ARMACOST TOLD THE THAI THAT AMERICA'S CURRENT APPARENT LACK OF INTEREST IN THAILAND IS NOT A SIGN OF DISAPPROVAL OR DISINTEREST IN THE NEW THAI GOVERNMENT BUT IS, RATHER, DUE TO AMERICA'S PREOCCUPATION WITH ITS OWN NEW GOVERNMENT. HE PREDICTED THAT IN YEARS TO COME, AMERICAN AID TO THAILAND WILL

ACTUALLY INCREASE BUT THAT IT WILL BE FUNNELED THROUGH INTERNATIONAL CHANNELS. ARMACOST WAS TOLD OF TWO KEY THAI CONCERNS: RICE QUOTAS AND REFUGEES. "REFUGEES ARE A HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE," ONE OF THE THAI PARTICIPANTS POINTED OUT. "NOW MOST OF THE SKILLED AND EDUCATED REFUGEES HAVE BEEN ABSORBED BY THE WEALTHY COUNTRIES AND WE ARE LEFT WITH THE UNEMPLOYABLE." THE MOST OVERRIDING THAI CONCERN, HOWEVER, WAS CLEARLY A NEED FOR ASSURANCE THAT AMERICA STILL CONSIDERS THE INDEPENDENCE OF THAILAND IMPORTANT. ARMACOST ALSO MET WITH DEPUTY SUPREME COMMANDER GENERAL KRIANGSAK CHAMANAN AND WITH NUMEROUS MISSION OFFICIALS DURING HIS TWO DAY VISIT.

5. "POSTER AS ART" EXHIBIT: CHIANG MAI BRANCH POST REPORTS THAT THE AGENCY'S "POSTER AS ART" EXHIBITION WAS THE CENTERPIECE OF ONE OF THE YEAR'S BEST CULTURAL ATTRACTIONS. LOCAL ARTISTS COOPERATED WITH THE BRANCH POST IN MOUNTING THE EXHIBIT IN THE CENTER AUDITORIUM. ABOUT SEVENTY PERSONS, INCLUDING LOCAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OFFICIALS AND BUSINESSMEN AS WELL AS ARTISTS, TEACHERS AND NEWSMEN ATTENDED THE INVITATIONAL OPENING OF THE EXHIBIT ON MAY 20. THIS EVENT FEATURED PRESENTATIONS ON AMERICAN POSTER ART BY TWO RESIDENT US-TRAINED THAI ARTISTS. HEAVY MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE OPENING RESULTED IN CONTINUOUS INTEREST IN THE DISPLAY THROUGHOUT THE WEEK IT REMAINED OPEN.

6. BNC LANGUAGE PROGRAM REGISTRATION: AS REGISTRATION NEARS COMPLETION, ENROLLMENT FOR THE NEW TERM OF THE BNC LANGUAGE PROGRAM HAS REACHED 6525. THIS IS ABOUT 900 HIGHER THAN THE FIGURE FOR LAST TERM AND 145 HIGHER THAN THE SAME TERM LAST YEAR.

MCGINLEY

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